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AN OBSERVATION ON THE DESIGN OF ESTABLISHING ANNUAL EXAMINATIONS AT CAMBRIDGE.

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Cambridge, Nov. 14th, 1774.

SEVERAL plans for annual examinations have been offered to the Univerſity. All of them proceed upon the notion of ſome great defect in our preſent ſyſtem of education; unleſs perhaps we ought to except the *candid* Author (as it is the faſhion to call him)

of a propoſal delivered *en badinant*, who *wiſhes to conceal his own opinion*. This writer firſt ſuggeſted the idea, that public examinations might be adapted to the lectures of the Tutors, and make the hearers of thoſe lectures more attentive. And he offered ſome expedients for that purpoſe. But what he thought of as an advantage, which might poſſibly ariſe from *a due execution of his ſcheme, if received with univerſal concurrence*; our warm Reformer eagerly embraces as the certain and immediate effect of general examinations, even though he rejects every method propoſed by his Aſſociate, to connect them with the lectures, or to render them leſs diſagreeable to the Tutors, or the Pupils. And becauſe the calm Projector conceived, that the Pupils might become *more attentive* than they are; the Other avows, as *a fundamental principle*, that *an almoſt univerſal inattention to every ſpecies of uſeful literature prevails in all the orders of our Youth*. Young men, we may preſume, are nearly alike at all times,

times. And if the fault here alleged be almoſt univerſal, it muſt be owing to ſome defect in our inſtitutions.

But how is this accuſation ſupported? The writer excuſes himſelf from *entering into a proof by facts.* He does wiſely in not calling theſe unexceptionable witneſſes. They would declare againſt him. Inattention to lectures is not a general fault among our Pupils. They are rather to be blamed for an imprudent eagerneſs to be thus inſtructed. We know, that, when any bold Pretender publiſhes his bills, he uſually gains an audience, even though he has nothing to offer them, but trite objections to the Religion or Government of their country. More reputable lectures, when publicly read, are frequented by greater numbers. Many, beſides the Students of Phyſic, have of late years attended the Profeſſors of Anatomy, Botany, and Chemiſtry. But by far the moſt uſeful inſtitution of this ſort is the con-

ſtant daily lectures of the Tutors in the ſeparate Colleges. That theſe are generally well attended, we may reaſonably preſume; becauſe the moſt eminent for abilities and induſtry among the preſent Tutors, and among thoſe, who for many years executed this office, and ſtill reſide among us, make few complaints, and have clearly and publicly expreſſed their judgment, that the Univerſity ſhould not interfere in this matter. Beſides the lectures eſtabliſhed in the Univerſity, and in every College, almoſt all Noblemen and Gentlemen of fortune, and many whoſe circumſtances can ſcarce allow it, ſeek for private inſtruction. And the number of theſe voluntary Pupils is ſo great, that every young Maſter of Arts of diſtinguiſhed abilities may have as many, as he is willing to teach. It ſeems indeed to be the general opinion, that ſome of theſe private Inſtructors go forward too haſtily, and aim at conducting their Pupils to the more difficult parts of ſcience, before they are prepared by

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an acquaintance with the eaſier. And to check ſuch an overſpeedy progreſs, the Proctors and Moderators of the preſent year formed the reſolution, which has been publiſhed by the Vicechancellor. But though the ſtudies of ſome few young men may have been directed not wiſely; (and they have little reaſon to expect better ſucceſs, when they ſeparate themſelves from their principal Tutor, and chooſe another Inſtructor unknown to and unconnected with him;) yet it cannot be reaſonably ſuſpected, that thoſe, who of their own accord beſtow their time and money to procure theſe lectures, do not endeavour to gain inſtruction from them. So little appearance of truth has the CALUMNY, on which the late project was declared to be founded, that inattention to the learning taught here is almoſt univerſal among our Youth!

But were the accuſation in ſome degree juſt, what is the remedy propoſed? If we may be

allowed to think, that the Engliſh Univerſities are at all ſuperior to other ſeminaries in their mode of education, we certainly owe this ſuperiority to the Founders of our Colleges. In theſe the Governors and Inſtructors live with their Pupils, whom they teach and examine daily. They have conſtant opportunities of diſcerning the capacity, the diligence, and the temper of each. They can quicken one by difficulties, and not diſcourage another by propoſing to him ſubjects above his reach. They can obſerve, which of them may be influenced by hope or fear, by cenſure or applauſe. If the Student has any views of advantage from his College, theſe muſt add weight to the authority of his Governors; and eſpecially of his Tutor, without whoſe recommendation he can ſeldom hope to obtain them. If his fortune ſets him above ſuch expectations, yet the approbation of his Parents and Friends will depend in a great meaſure upon the teſtimony of thoſe, to whom they have committed the

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care of his education. Nor can the Tutor want motives to uſe his authority for the good of his Pupils. The particular College, in which a young Nobleman or Gentleman is admitted, is uſually determined by ſome connection of the Society, or of ſome principal Member of it, or of the Tutor, with his Family. In ſuch caſes private regards, and ſometimes views of intereſt, will coincide with a ſenſe of duty, and make the Perſons, to whom he is entruſted, very ſollicitous for his improvement. In all caſes the reputation of the College, and of the Tutor, depends very much upon the ſucceſs of the Students. When any of them diſtinguiſhes himſelf in learning, the Tutor and the Pupil ſhare the honour and the joy. This union of their pleaſure, and the conſtant intercourſe between them, are naturally productive of mutual affection and regard; which encreaſe the authority of the Tutor, and render the exerciſe of it mild and liberal. Very ſtrong, and very laſting, proofs

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of this affection may be found in almoſt every College through the Univerſity. If, with all theſe advantages, the authority of Governors and Tutors cannot ſecure the attention of every young Student, (and we have reaſon to believe, that no plan of diſcipline will ſecure it ſo effectually, as we may wiſh,) is it therefore to be aboliſhed? It would ſurely be a bold and dangerous expedient, to take the direction of the ſtudies of our youth from the particular Colleges, and the Tutors there appointed to inſtruct them; and to commit it to ſeven Examiners, hired at the mean price of ten guineas yearly, and choſen anew every year, who muſt be wholly ſtrangers to moſt of the Pupils, to their abilities, their previous education, the profeſſions or ſtations, for which they are deſigned; and to authorize three or four of theſe Examiners, after a haſty ſecret trial, without any preparatory knowledge of them, to give a public, and laſting, judgment concerning the reſpective merits of perhaps two hundred

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young men, among whom there muſt often be ſome better ſcholars, than the Examiners, and ſome juſt entering into life of the higheſt ranks in the kingdom; and all this, for the ſake of adding to the cuſtomary examinations one or two more, whilſt they ſtay here, neither ſo long, nor open to ſo many hearers, as thoſe they go through under a diligent Tutor in his chamber every week. Perſons at a diſtance may be deceived by the title of *public*, which has been given to theſe examinations; but here we all know, that according to every plan offered to the Senate, the *judgment* only was intended to be public, the *trial* both ſhort and private, and the equity of the judgment was to depend on the very quick diſcernment, and ſteady impartiality, of the Triers. But the rules propoſed did not affect the Students only. The Tutors too, the eſtabliſhed and experienced Tutors, muſt have ſubmitted to the ſame direction, and have changed their lectures every year, according to the fancies of theſe

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Examiners; or have ſent their Pupils unprepared to the examinations. Or, what is more probable, (if we may judge from the complaints that are made, when any profeſſed private Tutor becomes a Moderator) ſome one, who might have obtained the office of Examiner, would have opened a chamber, and have undertaken, at a price agreed on, to prepare a Student, more or leſs, for the honour to which he might aſpire, and have tempted him to neglect the inſtructions of his Tutor, and the diſcipline of his College. Thoſe, who rightly conceive the effects of ſuch a change, will be reminded by it of the Architect, who, diſſatisfied with our *old buildings*, propoſed, about the middle of the laſt century, *to pull them all down, except King's College Chapel*, and to erect in their ſtead one ample and *uniform* ſtructure, *ſuch as it behooveth an Academy to be in a* FREE AND WELL ORDERED COMMONWEALTH.

Whatever reformation is wanted among our Youth,

Youth, it may eaſily be introduced in the ſeparate Colleges. The Maſter and Fellows of each College have all the powers, that can be wanted for this purpoſe. Beſides every milder kind of authority, they can ſuſpend from a degree, ruſticate, or expel, any of their own Students. They, and they only, have the means of judging, when it is neceſſary, or expedient, to uſe theſe powers. And though they do in fact uſe them fifty times, where the Univerſity uſes them once, yet it has never been pretended, that the exerciſe of them is too frequent or arbitrary. Some have thought, that this authority cannot have ſufficient influence in the very ſmall Colleges; as if it were more difficult to govern few, than many. But the grounds of this miſtake are evident. Where by the ſmalneſs of the Society, the older and younger Members are brought together more frequently, the Older ſee more of the foibles of youth; at which they are apt to take offence, without conſidering, that this continual in-

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ſpection, which makes them look upon their Students, as more licentious than others, really reſtrains them, and makes them better. If it does not, it muſt be owing to circumſtances, which no laws can cure, the incapacity or negligence of thoſe, who ſhould execute them. It would be unfortunate indeed, if a whole Society were chargeable with theſe defects. But the miſchief, at the worſt, though without remedy, is only temporary, and not extenſive.

All the facts here briefly ſtated, and all the reaſoning upon them, lead to this one obſervation; "That the buſineſs of education, both of government and inſtruction, is conducted with more ſucceſs, as it has been conducted for ſome ages, under the domeſtic diſcipline of each College, than it could be under the direction of the Senate." It is ſufficient, that the exerciſes, the examinations, and the petitions, for degrees, are all referred by our laws and cuſ-

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toms to the whole Body. But the private diſcipline of Colleges has much more influence, than all theſe. It extends to all their Members, at all times; not to thoſe only who want degrees, juſt when they want them; and it is certainly exerciſed with more ſtrictneſs, probably with more fairneſs, than the other. This then is the diſcipline, which ought to be ſupported, and, we truſt, will be ſupported againſt every novelty, that may tend to overthrow it. Some ſuch novelties have been propoſed, and ſome introduced, by Men, who did not perceive their tendency. It is not my deſign to enumerate them. One only ſhall be juſt mentioned: not on account of its *importance*; but becauſe, coming from a Perſon, who *means no ill* to the Univerſity, but is not aware of the delicacy, with which an eſtabliſhed authority ſhould be treated, the bare mention of it may prevent its repetition. The PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY, in a public advertiſement, deſires the Heads of Colleges to ſend the names

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of *ſuch as they appoint* to attend his lectures; but deſires the Noblemen, who *deſign* to attend, to ſend their own names: plainly ſuggeſting to their young minds a notion, againſt which every wiſe friend would anxiouſly guard them, that they are not, like Perſons of inferior ranks, to be under the direction of their Governors.